

Archipelago

My husband levitates at night. As birds begin
to vibrate and snow sifts from the curtains,
I wake to see him lift an inch, cat-curved
on his side, soft as bread. He faces away
but I can tell he smiles, every breath huffs
upwards. I don't touch him. I fear his rest,
worry my stranger's reach will stop his heart.

My mother searches drawers at night. Thunk
thunk—I can tell they're empty, the next room
made hollow with the slap of resinless MDF,
its peculiar Calvinism. What does she look for?
Not folded vests, broderie anglaise, not scalloped
necks or figure-hugging skirts; she prefers
pantsuits these days, the shed skins of shapes.

My daughter lines her tired eyes at night: violet
or ultramarine, even when she stays at home.
I can hear the tinny iPod dreaming, its tsking
irks me like no other sound—insectoid,
subtly overbearing. At least she's still here.
It makes me wince, finding a vein in my head,
but it tick tick ticks my melancholy girl to sleep.

JANE MCKIE

My son is like my husband at night: lost
to the pillow without complications.
The story he reads behind his lids might shock me.
I choose not to enquire—of myself, or of my friends
with famished boys. It is enough to know
his hair smells like pan-drops, his lovely feet
slop over the bed. He is an open lotus flower.